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1961/07/29

July 29, 1961

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: WVR

General Taylor and I have put our heads together and agreed the following list of questions a military mission to Southeast Asia might answer.

1. At the present time are the Vietnamese losing ground, holding their ground, or gaining ground in the war against the Viet Cong?
2. When are the Vietnamese likely to produce a plan for the systematic elimination of the Viet Cong -- they are allegedly now at work on such a plan; and what ideas, if any, does our MAAG have about what such a systematic plan should look like?
3. How far forward is the administration of the Viet-Nam army on general staff lines?
4. How far forward is the organization of a central intelligence system capable of acquiring and using information from the villages?
5. Does the present disposition of Vietnamese forces and the planned disposition of the extra 20,000 and the extra 30,000 make sense?
6. What are the possibilities of offensive action by Diem's forces against North Viet-Nam:

(1) By air drops?

(2) By coastal raids?

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E. O. 11652, SEC. 3(E), 5(D), 5(E) AND 11

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BY MFD NARS, DATE 6/21/77

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What would be Diem's attitude to such a program supported by U.S.?

7. What would be the effect upon Viet-Nam troop requirements if Diem were encouraged to push out into Laos in order to control infiltration routes? Would Diem be willing to join in a cooperative action with Laos and Thailand to clean up the panhandle of Laos?

8. What are the bottlenecks which retard the increase in the strength of the Vietnamese Army? Is everything being done to eliminate them?

9. Is the counter-guerrilla training adequate which is being conducted? Do we have the necessary U.S. Special Forces personnel on the job?

10. Is the MAAG adequate in size, quality of personnel and leadership to meet the requirements implicit in the programmed expansion of the Vietnamese Army?

[In view of the area approach which is being taken at the planning level here, I would think that any military mission to Viet-Nam should include a visit to Laos and Thailand.] What we are trying to determine are the realities in the military situation. In particular, we want to know whether the necessary cooperative military action between Laos, Viet-Nam and Thailand can be put together in time to control the situation on the ground. [We are inclined to think that it would be a good rather than a bad diplomatic move for an American military mission to visit Southeast Asia.]

[Until we are farther along in our present area planning we think it premature to send a mission. Undoubtedly new questions will be arising which we do not think of now. On the other hand the rainy season will soon be over; and our ducks should then be in a row.]

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